(c) The following remedial measures have been taken by the Government to stabilize prices of cotton:—

(i) The cotton Corporation of India (CCI), a central nodal agency, has procured kapas equivalent to 7,58,904 bales of 170 kgs. each in various States, the share of Gujarat being 2,08,199 bales as on 8.3.2002 Purchases are still in progress.

(ii) Import duty on raw cotton has been increased from 5% to 10% since 9th January, 2002 to restrain imports.

(iii) Raw cotton has been placed under Open General Licence (OGL) to help Indian farmers to earn higher prices in the international market for their produce.

(iv) The Government has also launched Technology Mission on Cotton with four Mini Missions with total fund allocation of Rs. 593 crores with the objectives of increasing cotton production and productivity.

Transfer of Central Farm at Aralem to Kerala

2083. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Kerala Government has requested to transfer the Central State Farm at Aralem to Kerala;

(b) whether Government have taken a decision in the matter; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) No decision has been taken by the Government in the matter.

MSP for red gram in Karnataka

2084. SHRI H.K. JAVARE GOWDA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the red gram growing farmers in Karnataka are incurring losses, due to market fluctuations, low yield and menace of pest;

(b) if so, whether Government would enhance the Minimum Support Price from Rs. 1320/- to Rs. 2000/-; and

(c) the details of steps Government propose to take to protect the red gram growers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) to (c) The wholesale prices of red gram (arhar) are presently ruling above the Minimum Support Prices at important selected centres in the country; however, the prices had fallen below the support level during November-December, 2001 at certain centres in Karnataka, but have started firming up from January onwards and are at present ruling generally above the Minimum Support Prices.

The Government has already fixed the Minimum Support Price of arhar for the 2001-02 season at Rs. 1320/- per qtl. There is no proposal to enhance the MSP already announced by the Government.

In order to protect the interests of pulses growers in the country, a centrally sponsored scheme of National Pulses Development Project (NPDP) is being implemented in 30 States/UTs in 350 districts on 75:25 sharing patterns between the Government of India and the States. The assistance is being provided to all the pulses including red gram. Under the NPDP Scheme, incentives are being provided to the farmers through State Governments on the use of certified seeds, rhizobium culture micro-nutrients, sprinkler sets, improved farm implements etc. so as to motivate them to increase the production of pulses. The NPDP Scheme is being implemented in 27 districts of Karnataka.

To save the crops from pre-harvest losses from insect pest disease, a central sector scheme entitled, "Promotion of Integrated Pest Management" is also being implemented. This Scheme is being implemented through 26 central integrated pest management centres located in 22 States including Karnataka and 1 union territory. The main mandate of these centres is pest disease monitoring, production and releases of bio-control agents, conservation of bio-control agents and human resource development by imparting training to agricultural extension officers and farmers at the grass root levels by organizing farmers field schools in the farmers fields.

Coconut Technology Mission

2085. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether sanction has since been given to the Coconut Technology Mission;